

**Imago Dei in the Age of AI:
Faith, Ethics, and the Future of Intelligence**

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The Relationship between Philosophical, Temple and Social Reforms Initiated by Saint Ramanuja and Andal's Hymns in Sri Vaishnavism

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Abstract. -- This article examines the inter-relationship between the philosophical system, temple-centred practices, and social reforms initiated by Ramanuja, in relation to the devotional theology articulated in the hymns of Andal within the Sri Vaishnava tradition. The paper argues that Andal's compositions, particularly the Tiruppavai, are not merely expressions of personal devotion but serve as a theological foundation that anticipates and informs Ramanuja's systematic articulation of Vishishtadvaita Vedanta. Employing a qualitative, hermeneutical, and interdisciplinary methodology, the study analyses primary texts alongside historical and theological sources to explore the convergence between poetic devotion and philosophical doctrine. The article further investigates how Ramanuja's temple reforms and emphasis on inclusivity reflect the egalitarian and communal vision embedded in Andal's hymns. By integrating literary, philosophical, and socio-religious analyses, the study highlights the continuity between vernacular bhakti literature and institutional religious transformation in South India. It concludes that the synergy between Andal's devotional theology and Ramanuja's reforms played a pivotal role in shaping the theological depth, liturgical structure, and social inclusivity of Sri Vaishnavism.

Keywords: Azhwars, Andal, Lord, Bhakti, Reforms, Hymns, Temple, Ramanuja

Introduction

Andal (8-9th century), born in Srivilliputhur and revered as a divine incarnation, is celebrated for her intense love for Lord Vishnu and her unique expression of bridal mysticism. Her compositions continue to guide and inspire devotees, particularly through their emphasis on surrender (prapatti) and unwavering devotion. Ramanuja (c. 1017–1137 CE) is a prominent Indian philosopher and theologian in the Sri Vaishnavism tradition and acclaimed for his philosophy of Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism). Sri Vaishnavism is a distinctive religious tradition that harmoniously integrates devotional literature with systematic philosophy and institutional practice. Central to this tradition are Andal, whose hymns express an intense and inclusive form of bhakti, and Ramanuja, who articulated the philosophical framework of Vishishtadvaita Vedanta and initiated significant temple and social reforms. This article explores the relationship between Andal's devotional theology and Ramanuja's philosophical, institutional, and reformatory contributions, arguing that her hymns anticipate and inform his vision of inclusive worship and accessible salvation. By examining the convergence of poetic devotion and doctrinal formulation, the study highlights the continuity between Tamil bhakti traditions and the broader development of Sri Vaishnavism.

Aim and Objectives

This article aims to critically examine the interrelationship between the philosophical system, temple-centred religious practices, and social reforms articulated by Ramanuja, in light of the devotional theology embedded in the hymns of Andal within the Sri Vaishnava tradition. It seeks to demonstrate that Andal's poetic expressions are not merely devotional in character but also foundational to later systematic theological and institutional developments.

Objectives:

1. To investigate the extent to which Ramanuja's temple reforms reflect the devotional ethos articulated in Andal's compositions.
2. To examine the social implications of Ramanuja's reforms, particularly with regard to inclusivity and accessibility, in relation to the communal and egalitarian dimensions of Andal's Bhakti.
3. To contribute to the broader discourse on the integration of vernacular devotional literature and classical philosophical systems in South Indian religious traditions.

Methodological Approach

This article adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and interdisciplinary approach, drawing from theology, philosophy, literary studies, and religious history. It employs a

hermeneutical method to interpret the theological and symbolic dimensions of the hymns of Andal alongside the philosophical writings of Ramanuja. A historical-critical and comparative approach is also used to situate their contributions within context and to examine the convergence between poetic theology and philosophical articulation. This integrated methodology highlights how devotional experience in Tamil bhakti literature shapes doctrinal thought and institutional practice.

Sources of Data

Primary sources include the Tiruppavai and Nachiyar Tirumogi of Andal, as well as the principal works of Ramanuja, such as the Sri Bashyam, Vedarthasangraha, and Gita Bashyam. Liturgical texts and established temple traditions within Sri Vaishnavism also serve as important materials for analysis.

Secondary sources consist of scholarly commentaries, critical studies, and academic publications on Sri Vaishnavism, the Bhakti movement, and South Indian religious history. These include journal articles, monographs, and dissertations that engage with themes of devotion, philosophy, and social reform.

Analytical Framework

The study employs a multi-dimensional analytical framework to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the subject. A theological-hermeneutical reading of the hymns of Andal explores themes such as surrender (prapatti), divine grace, and collective devotion. Simultaneously, the philosophical system of Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita Vedanta is examined for its emphasis on devotion and accessible salvation. A comparative-theological approach highlights the convergence between Andal's poetic theology and Ramanuja's doctrinal thought. Further, a socio-religious analysis evaluates Ramanuja's inclusive reforms in light of Andal's egalitarian vision. Finally, a literary-critical reading elucidates the theological depth and symbolic richness of Andal's compositions.

Bhakti Movement

Bhakti, defined as deep personal devotion to God, developed as a major religious movement in India, with roots dating to around the eighth century CE and later flourishing in North India during the Mughal period. It sought to revitalize Hindu spirituality by offering an accessible path of devotion, often in response to the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. Key figures such as the Azhwars and Nayanmars, along with Acharyas like Adi Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, emphasized devotion as the primary means to attain God, making Bhakti a transformative force shaped by its historical and social context.

1. The reasons for evolution of Bhakti movement¹

The persistence of deep-rooted social inequalities across various strata of society generated widespread dissatisfaction among the masses, particularly those marginalized by rigid caste hierarchies and exclusionary practices. This discontent prompted a search for alternative religious and social frameworks that could offer a more egalitarian vision of spiritual life. In this context, the Bhakti movement emerged as a transformative force, emphasizing personal devotion over institutionalized barriers and advocating the spiritual equality of all individuals. Its inclusive ethos attracted broad-based support, as it provided a meaningful pathway toward both religious fulfilment and social harmony.

Equally significant was the growing disillusionment with the strict and often inaccessible ritualistic practices that dominated religious life. The complexity and rigidity of these rituals alienated common people, who found themselves excluded from meaningful participation due to lack of knowledge, resources, or priestly mediation. This disconnect between religious practice and popular understanding created a fertile ground for reform-oriented movements. The Bhakti tradition responded by simplifying modes of worship, promoting vernacular expressions of devotion, and encouraging a direct, personal relationship with the divine, thereby making spirituality more accessible and experiential.

Furthermore, the Hindu religious landscape encountered substantial challenges from both indigenous traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism in the early centuries CE, and later from the advent of Islam and its distinct theological and cultural practices. These encounters necessitated internal reflection and adaptation within Hinduism. The Bhakti movement played a crucial role in this process by rearticulating religious practices in a more accessible and emotionally resonant form. By emphasizing devotion (bhakti) as the central means to approach the divine, it not only revitalized Hindu spiritual life but also offered a cohesive response to external religious influences, fostering resilience and continuity within the tradition.

2. Bhakti literature

Bhakti literature played a pivotal role in the expansion and popularization of the Bhakti movement by making spiritual ideas accessible to the common people. Composed primarily in regional and vernacular languages rather than in classical Sanskrit, Bhakti poems, hymns, and songs enabled ordinary individuals to engage directly with religious teachings without the mediation of learned elites. The emotional depth and simplicity of these compositions fostered a personal and intimate connection with the divine, transforming worship into an experiential and participatory practice. Moreover, the lyrical and devotional nature of Bhakti literature provided psychological comfort and emotional release, allowing devotees to express their inner struggles, hopes, and aspirations, thereby making religious practice both meaningful and therapeutic.

Beyond its religious significance, the Bhakti movement evolved into a powerful agent of social reform, challenging entrenched hierarchies and promoting a more inclusive vision of society. By emphasizing devotion (bhakti) as the primary path to salvation, it undermined rigid distinctions based on caste, gender, and religious affiliation. Bhakti saints and poets consistently advocated the idea that divine grace is accessible to all, irrespective of social status or background. This egalitarian ethos not only fostered a sense of unity and shared spiritual identity but also contributed to gradual transformations in social attitudes. Consequently, the Bhakti movement must be understood not merely as a devotional tradition, but as a dynamic socio-religious phenomenon that sought to harmonize spiritual devotion with ideals of equality, compassion, and human dignity.

The evolution of worship and bhakti (devotion) into the form of temples in Hinduism²

Devotion, or bhakti, originates as an inner spiritual experience arising from the depths of the human heart, characterized by love, surrender, and a longing for the divine. Over time, this deeply personal sentiment gradually assumed institutional and communal forms, particularly through the establishment and development of temples as centres of worship. Temples became the focal points where individual devotion was collectively expressed, structured, and sustained within a religious framework. Thus, what began as an inward and subjective experience of the divine was increasingly externalized and socialized, finding visible expression through ritual practices, sacred spaces, and organized modes of worship.

Prior to the emergence of the Azhwars, worship in Vaishnava temples was predominantly governed by Vedic traditions and ritual systems. Religious practices were carried out in strict accordance with the Vedas and Agamas, involving elaborate procedures such as fire sacrifices (Yagnas), offerings, and highly codified ceremonial acts. These rituals required precise adherence to scriptural injunctions and were often complex in nature, making them less accessible to the general populace. The emphasis was largely on orthopraxy—correct performance of rituals—rather than on personal emotional engagement, thereby reinforcing a structured and formalized approach to divine worship.

Within this ritualistic framework, priests, pundits, and prohibits played a central and authoritative role as custodians of sacred knowledge and mediators between the devotee and the divine. They were responsible for the recitation of Vedic mantras, the performance of sacrificial rites, and the maintenance of ritual purity. The repetition of specific mantras formed an essential component of worship, as these were believed to invoke divine presence and ensure the efficacy of rituals. Consequently, Vaishnava worship during this period was largely shaped by Vedic prescriptions and conducted at a formal, often impersonal level, with limited scope for individual emotional expression or direct personal engagement with God.

Azhwars and Bhakti Literature and Temple Worship⁴

The Azhwars, revered as Tamil poet-saints, played a foundational role in shaping the devotional ethos of Vaishnavism through their profound hymns dedicated to Lord Vishnu. While traditional Sri Vaishnava accounts place their existence in a mytho-historical framework between 4200 BCE and 2700 BCE, spanning the Dwapara and Kali Yugas, modern historical scholarship situates them more plausibly between the 5th and 8th/9th centuries CE. During this period, their compositions were consolidated into the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*, a corpus of four thousand devotional hymns that became central to Vaishnava religious life. These hymns not only articulated intense personal devotion but also reoriented temple worship toward a more participatory and emotionally resonant form of spirituality.

Between the 5th and 8th centuries CE, Vaishnava temple worship underwent a significant transformation, with the Azhwars' hymns becoming integral to liturgical practice. The *Divya Prabandham* was recited alongside ritual observances, embedding vernacular devotion within formal temple traditions. Liturgical expressions included elaborate festivals where the deity's images were taken in procession, symbolizing divine accessibility to the devotees. Rituals such as *abhisheka* (anointing with sacred substances like milk, curd, and honey) and *deepa aradhana* (offering of light) further enriched the devotional atmosphere. Concurrently, temple architecture evolved into a structured and symbolic space, comprising elements such as the *garbhagriha* (sanctum sanctorum), *artha mandapam*, *maha mandapam*, and surrounding *praharas*, each serving specific ritual and congregational purposes.

Beyond their religious functions, Vaishnava temples emerged as vital centres of social and cultural life, contributing significantly to education, arts, and public welfare. Institutions such as Vedic schools and early healthcare centres were often associated with temple complexes, highlighting their broader societal role. The linguistic shift initiated by the Azhwars, particularly the elevation of Tamil devotional hymns (*pasurams*), marked a crucial democratization of worship. Recognizing the challenges associated with the precise recitation of Sanskrit mantras, the theologian Ramanuja institutionalized the recitation of Tamil *Prabanthams* in temple rituals and domestic worship. This integration ensured that devotion was both accessible and meaningful to the wider populace. Even today, in Vaishnava liturgical practice, the *Divya Prabandham* continues to be recited alongside Vedic chants, reflecting a harmonious synthesis of classical and vernacular traditions.

Ramanuja and the twelve Azhwars⁶

Ramanuja and the Azhwars occupy a central and complementary place in the development of Vaishnava theology and ritual practice. While the Azhwars expressed

intense personal devotion through their Tamil hymns dedicated to Lord Vishnu, Ramanuja systematized and philosophically articulated these devotional insights within a coherent theological framework. As the principal exponent of Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism), Ramanuja integrated metaphysical reflection with lived devotion, thereby bridging the gap between abstract philosophy and popular religiosity. His reforms, particularly in major temple centres such as Srirangam, Tirupathi, Melkote, and Kanchipuram, demonstrate his commitment to making worship more inclusive and accessible. By transcending rigid caste distinctions and opening the path of devotion to all, he emerged not only as a theologian but also as a significant social reformer within the Vaishnava tradition.

The Azhwars, traditionally counted as twelve, were instrumental in shaping the devotional foundations of Vaishnavism through their composition of the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*. Their poetry emphasizes unconditional love, surrender, and intimate communion with Lord Vishnu, often expressed in deeply emotional and symbolic language. By choosing Tamil as their medium, they democratized religious knowledge and provided an alternative to the exclusivity of Sanskrit-based liturgy. Their contributions extended beyond theology into the realm of literature, significantly enriching Tamil devotional and cultural traditions. The Azhwars thus not only revitalized religious life but also redefined the relationship between language, devotion, and accessibility, ensuring that spiritual experience was no longer confined to a privileged few.

The relationship between Ramanuja and the Azhwars is one of profound continuity and mutual reinforcement, despite their historical separation. Ramanuja held the hymns of the Azhwars in the highest esteem, regarding them as authoritative expressions of Vedic truth rendered in an accessible form. He actively institutionalized their recitation within temple rituals and domestic worship, thereby embedding vernacular devotion into the core of Vaishnava liturgy. Drawing upon both the *Divya Prabandham* and the Upanishadic tradition, he developed key theological concepts such as *prapatti* (total surrender to God) as the supreme means to liberation (*moksha*). Together, the Azhwars and Ramanuja contributed to a unified devotional vision that dismantled barriers of caste, gender, and social hierarchy, opening the path to salvation for all. Their combined legacy continues to shape Sri Vaishnava practice, where philosophical depth and emotional devotion coexist in a dynamic and inclusive religious tradition.

Ramanuja's "Vishishtadvaita" in brief⁷

"Vishishtadvaita" means "Not Two, in a special way" or "Only one, in a special way". We say that Jivathma and Paramathma are different yet not different. They are different, as shown in the *bhedha sruti*. Jivathma is the body, and Paramathma is the soul. The soul is different from the body. This is called "*Sareera-Sareeri Bhaavam*" In this sense, Paramathma is different from Jivathma. However, they are not different

because of the relationship between the body and soul, as explained in the ghataka sruti. Let's consider person called Krishna. We refer to both Krishna's body and Krishna's soul as Krishna. Krishna's body and soul together are called "Krishna". Therefore, Krishna is only one. Likewise, Jivathma (the body) and Paramathma (the soul) can be viewed as one, in a special way, because of the body-soul relationship. Thus, Jivathma and Paramathma can be described as two-in-one or one-in-two. This philosophy is known as "Vishishtadvaita". Saint Ramanuja perfected this system. It teaches that while individual souls are distinct from the Supreme Being (Vishnu/Narayana), they are inseparably part of Him, like rays of the sun or sparks of a fire.

For ordinary devotees irrespective of their religion, caste and creed, Ramanuja insisted "Prapatti – total surrender to Lord" as the way of life and "Kainkaryam - selfless service" to lord and his devotees as means of life so that they can also attain "Moksha- complete liberation" at the end of their life. **Prapatti/Saranagati (Total Surrender):** The easiest and preferred path for ordinary people, where one totally surrenders to the grace of God, acknowledging one's inability to achieve salvation alone.

Andal's Theology in action from childhood^{8 & 12}

Andal, the only female among the twelve Azhwars, occupies a unique and exalted place in the Sri Vaishnava tradition as an embodiment of prapatti (total surrender to God). Her life represents an intense and unwavering devotion to Lord Vishnu, expressed through both her actions and poetic compositions. From her early childhood to her final mystical union with the divine, Andal's spiritual journey reflects the ideal of complete self-surrender and loving devotion, making her a central figure in the Bhakti movement and Tamil devotional literature.

According to traditional accounts, Andal was discovered as an infant by Periyazhwar, a devout worshipper of Lord Vishnu, in the sacred garden (Nandavanam) he maintained at Srivilliputhur in the Pandya region. The child was found beneath a basil (tulsi) plant on the auspicious day of Adi Puram, and he named her Gotha, meaning "garland" in Tamil and symbolically "one who offers herself" in Sanskrit. Raised in an atmosphere of devotion, Gotha developed a deep love for Lord Krishna and actively assisted Periyazhwar in preparing flower garlands for temple worship. In a notable episode, she would adorn herself with these garlands before they were offered to the deity, an act initially rebuked by her father but later divinely affirmed when Lord Vishnu appeared in a dream, declaring his preference for the garlands worn by her. This event led to the recognition of Andal as a divine incarnation, often identified with Bhumadevi (Mother Earth).

As Andal matured, her devotion intensified into a singular aspiration to unite with Lord Vishnu as her divine consort, leading her to reject all worldly marriage proposals.

Inspired by the Bhagavata Purana, she observed the Paavai Nonbu during the Tamil month of Marghazhi, composing the Tiruppavai, a set of thirty hymns expressing collective devotion and spiritual discipline. Additionally, her Nachiyar Tirumozhi reveals her profound longing for divine union, articulated in deeply emotional and symbolic language. These works not only enriched Tamil devotional literature but also institutionalized forms of worship that continue to be observed in Vaishnava temples.

The culmination of Andal's spiritual journey is marked by her mystical union with Lord Ranganatha at Srirangam. According to tradition, both Periyazhwar and the Pandya king received divine instructions in dreams to bring Andal to the temple. Upon reaching the sanctum sanctorum, Andal is believed to have entered the presence of the deity and merged with the Lord, signifying the ultimate realization of prapatti. This narrative underscores the theological ideal of complete surrender and divine grace, while also reinforcing Andal's enduring legacy as a saint who transcended social conventions and redefined the possibilities of devotional spirituality within the Bhakti tradition.

13. Ramanuja and Andal^{8 & 9}

Ramanuja and Andal are two of the most significant figures in the Sri Vaishnava tradition, each contributing in distinct yet complementary ways to its theological and devotional development. Ramanuja, the foremost exponent of Vishishtadvaita philosophy, systematized the principles of qualified non-dualism and established a structured framework for devotional practice. Andal enriched the tradition through her profound devotional hymns, notably the Tiruppavai and Nachiyar Tirumozhi. While Ramanuja's contributions lie primarily in philosophical articulation and institutional reform, Andal's legacy is rooted in experiential devotion and poetic expression, making both indispensable to the growth of Vaishnavism.

Ramanuja's life and work reflect a deep commitment to the propagation of devotion (bhakti) and the inclusion of diverse communities within the fold of Vaishnavism. His extensive pilgrimages to sacred centres and his reforms in temple worship significantly shaped Sri Vaishnava practices. Notably, his reverence for Andal stands as a testament to the enduring influence of the Azhwar tradition.

Despite belonging to different historical periods, a profound devotional connection is traditionally recognized between Ramanuja and Andal. It is believed that Ramanuja held Andal in exceptional esteem, visiting her birthplace at Srivilliputhur and venerating her with deep affection, even regarding her as a spiritual sister. This symbolic relationship underscores the continuity of the Bhakti tradition, where the teachings and hymns of earlier saints inform and inspire later theologians. Andal's songs served as a spiritual guide for Ramanuja's theological reflections, and his actions further institutionalized her legacy within temple worship. Together, they exemplify a timeless devotional bond that

transcends historical boundaries, reinforcing the unity of philosophy and devotion in the Sri Vaishnava tradition.

Influence of Andal's hymns on Ramanuja's reforms/philosophy/approaches^{8, 9 & 12}

Ramanuja profoundly integrated the devotional expressions of the Azhwars into his theological and practical life, showing particular reverence for the hymns of Andal. He is traditionally believed to have recited the Tiruppavai daily during his bhakti rounds, earning him the title “Tiruppavai Jeeyar”. This reflects not only his admiration for Andal's poetic devotion but also his deep engagement with the philosophical insights embedded in her compositions.

Although Ramanuja emphasized adherence to sastric prescriptions in ritual practice, he maintained a broad and compassionate outlook, recognizing the value of sincere devotion even when expressed through imperfect or unconventional forms. He was particularly inspired by elements in Andal's hymns such as the collective fasting of young devotees, her imaginative identification with the cowherd community, and her poetic expressions of longing and praise for Lord Krishna, all of which he interpreted as authentic manifestations of bhakti.

Drawing from these devotional insights, Ramanuja affirmed that liberation (moksha) is not determined by birth or social status, but by genuine devotion and complete surrender (prapatti) to God. Andal's hymns thus served as both a spiritual guide and theological foundation for his teachings, illustrating the harmony between emotional devotion and philosophical reflection within the Sri Vaishnava tradition.

Integration of Tamil Nalayira Divya Prabandham into temple and home rituals^{9, 10 & 11}

Andal prayed to Lord Krishna in Tiruppavai song 30 “VangaKadalKadainthaMadhavanai” as follows:

“Sangath *thamizh malai muppadhum thappame*
ingu ipparisu uraiappar Ir irandu mal varaith thol
sengan thiru mugaththuch chelvath thiru malal
engum thiruvavul perru inburuvavar empavai”

Meaning: This Tamil Prabandham which has to be recited and enjoyed together in Goshtis, (Goshtis- bigger groups of devotees called “adiyars: - sangam)

Andal says that those who would recite all the Tamil thirty pasurams that she sung following the ways of gopikas of thiruvayppadi for reaching Krishnan, would also get the same benefit that the gopikas got and will live happily in this world and in srIvaikuntam by the grace of lord Vishnu and Lakshmi.

Integration of Tamil Nalayira Divya Prabandham into temple and home rituals whether its daily or monthly or yearly festivals is a direct outcome of Ramanuja's reforms. As per Vaishnava sastras, importance was given to all hymns and particularly Andal's Tiruppavai and Nachiyar Tirumozhi; they became a cornerstone of worship, recited daily in temples and homes. The recital of Andal's Tiruppavai hymns 29 and 30 and Periyazhwar's "Pallandu hymn" by all were made compulsory in temple and home aradhanas (Puja Satrumurai)". This daily continuous recitation by the devotees reinforces the principles of bhakti and prapatti in their hearts, changing the spiritual practice into a living, participatory experience from a mere adherence to mechanical rituals. This resonance of devotees facilitated the widespread adoption of her hymns within the tradition he systematized.

Temple reforms by Saint Ramanuja^{9 & 10}

Ramanuja stands out among religious thinkers for his distinctive and inclusive spiritual vision, which combined theological depth with social concern. At a time marked by rigid social hierarchies, he opened pathways for the marginalized to participate fully in religious life and aspire toward liberation (moksha). He firmly asserted that temples and the divine they enshrine belong to all sections of society, emphasizing that sincere bhakti (devotion), rather than birth or status, is the true means to attain eternal bliss. In this respect, Ramanuja's approach was both spiritually profound and socially transformative, redefining access to sacred spaces and religious experience.

One of his most notable reforms was his effort to integrate the so-called "untouchables" into temple worship. Revering Andal as equal to Mahalakshmi, Ramanuja extended this theological inclusivity into social practice by renaming marginalized communities as "Thirukkulathar", meaning descendants of the divine. At Melkote, in gratitude for their assistance, he granted them the right to worship in the temple, thereby challenging entrenched social barriers. This reform resonates with the spirit of Andal's Tiruppavai (Pasuram 21), which emphasizes that true devotion arises not from fear or status, but from sincere surrender, as exemplified by the humble cowherd community who approached the Lord with pure love.

Beyond temple reforms, Ramanuja also demonstrated his commitment to social welfare through practical initiatives aimed at the common good. His role in the construction of the Thondanur (Thonnur) Lake near present-day Mandya reflects his vision of service to humanity, as the reservoir continues to support irrigation and provide water to surrounding regions, including Melkote. This act aligns with the universal and compassionate vision expressed in Andal's Tiruppavai (Pasuram 4, "Aazhi Mazhai Kanna"), which speaks for abundant rains, agricultural prosperity, and the well-being of all living beings. Thus, Ramanuja's life exemplifies the integration of devotion, social equality, and humanitarian service, grounded in the theological insights of the Bhakti tradition.

Conclusion

The social and temple reforms initiated by Ramanuja (11th–12th century CE) bear significant theological and institutional relevance to the devotional hymns of Andal (8th century CE), particularly her Tiruppavai and Nachiyar Tirumozhi. Although Andal predates Ramanuja, his reformatory vision provided a systematic framework through which her devotional expressions could be preserved and integrated into the liturgical and doctrinal core of the Sri Vaishnava tradition. His emphasis on inclusivity, accessibility, and devotion as the primary path to salvation resonates strongly with the spiritual ideals articulated in her hymns.

Andal's compositions present a profound and emotionally rich expression of bhakti, centered on themes such as total surrender (prapatti), divine love, and communal devotion. Recognizing their theological depth, Ramanuja elevated her works to a canonical status and institutionalized their recitation within temple worship. In doing so, he ensured that her hymns functioned not only as literary expressions but also as authoritative sources of religious practice and teaching. Thus, Andal's devotional poetry and Ramanuja's philosophical and institutional contributions together form a unified and enduring foundation for the Sri Vaishnava tradition.

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